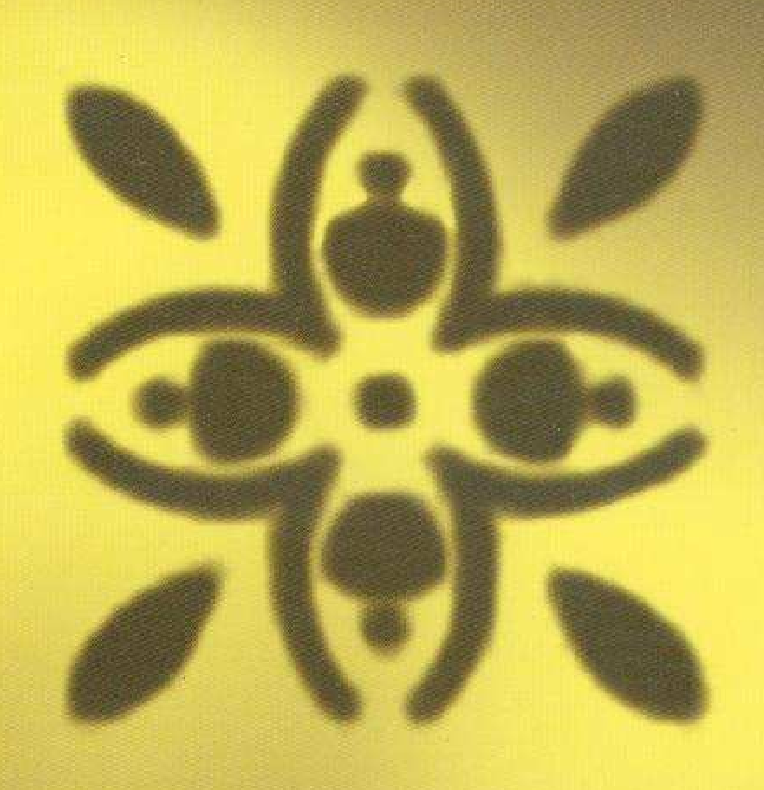
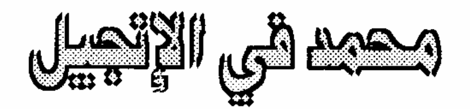
Muhammad In The Bible



Dr. Jamal A. Badawi

MUHAMMAD
IN THE BIBLE



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Other Characteristics of "The Prophet"

Reference to the Bible

Is it justifiable for Muslims to quote the Bible? There appears to be two common and extreme misconceptions about the Muslims' attitudes towards the Bible:

a) that Muslims base their faith in full or in part on the Bible;

b) that Muslims reject the Bible in total and accept no single word of it.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the last but not the only holy book revealed by Allah to mankind through His messengers.[1] It is, however, the only holy book which remained intact from the time of its revelation until the present time. Not only is the full text of the Qur'an available, but it is also available in the full and exact form as uttered by Prophet Muhammad[2] - peace be upon him- at the time of its revelation and in the original language in which it was revealed (Arabic). No addition, deletion, or interpolation found its way into the Qur'an. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the only remaining authoritative and authentic revelation available to mankind; authoritative because an objective study of the Qur'an clearly shows its divine origin; and authentic because of the conclusive evidence that it remained intact and was transmitted to us as it was revealed without being mixed with human and philosophical ideas and doctrines. As such, Muslims do not need any other scriptures to base their faith on, either in full or in part.

On the other hand, it is erroneous to think that Muslims reject the Bible entirely. There are at least two reasons for this:

a) One of the main articles of faith in Islam is the belief in all prophets and messengers sent before the advent of the last of them, Prophet Muhammad. This also necessitates believing in the holy books revealed to those prophets in the original forms of their revelation;(3)

b) According to the Qur'an all prophets were Muslims (i.e. those who consciously and lovingly submitted to the will of Allah), what they taught was nothing but earlier versions of Islam (conscious and loving submission to Allah) and their sincere followers were Muslims as well.(4) The fact that the transmission of earlier revelations, prior to the Qur'an came to suffer from inaccuracies and misinterpretations does not justify a total and categorical rejection of such scriptures. There are bound to be some passages and portions of the Bible whose essence, if not wording, need not be rejected by Muslims.

Criterion of acceptance

What is the Muslim basis or criterion for accepting or not accepting portions of passages from the Bible? The Qur'an itself provides such a criterion:

> ﴿*And unto you have We revealed the Scripture with the truth confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and having supremacy over it ....*﴾
>
> (The Qur'an 5:48)

This emphasizes two main aspects of the Qur'an:

a) The Qur'an confirms those teachings or passages of previous scriptures which remained intact.(5)

b) The Qur'an is the last, complete, authoritative and authentic revelation. It is the final arbiter and the only criterion to correct any inaccuracy or misinterpretation which might have occurred in the transmission of earlier scriptures. It helps in discovering human additions to or interpolations of previous revelations, even as it reveals possible deletions which might have taken place through the centuries prior to its revelation (the Qur'an). Indeed one of the names of the Qur'an is *al-Furqan* (the criterion which distinguishes between right and wrong, truth and falsehood).

It follows therefore that a Muslim has no reason to reject the essence of any passage in the Bible if such a passage is confirmed by the Qur'an.(6) For example, we read in the New Testament a reiteration of one of the Ten Commandments:

> "And Jesus answered him. The first of all commandments is, hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord"
>
> (Mark 12:29)

A Muslim who reads this passage in the Bible and compares it with the Qur'an can find no objection to its essence. After all the Qur'an confirms:

﴿*Say He is Allah, the One and Only (God)*﴾

(The Qur'an 112:1)

If, however, a Muslim reads in the Bible (or other previous scriptures for that matter) accusations of major moral sins levied against great prophets or doctrines which are totally negated in the Qur'an, the Muslim accepts only the Qur'anic version as the original unadulterated truth, revealed by Allah.

Likewise, if the Bible (or other scriptures) contains apparent prophecies about the advent of Prophet Muhammad, and if the Qur'an confirms that fact, then there is nothing unusual or objectionable in referring to such prophecies.

Prophecies in the Qur'an and the Bible

Qur'anic reference to prophecies

Is there any conclusive Qur'anic basis for claiming that the Bible did contain prophecies about the advent of Prophet Muhammad?

The original revelations given to prophets in the past contained a complete and clear profile of the advent of Prophet Muhammad. Even in its present form(s) the Bible still contains several such prophecies as will be shown in the forthcoming pages.

It is useful, however, to start with documenting the above statement.

a) Describing true believers, the Qur'an states:

> ﴾*Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are with them). He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul; and he will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear. Then those who believe in him, and honor him, and help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him: they are the successful.*﴿
>
> (The Qur'an 7:157)

This *Ayah* (verse) indicates that the characteristics as well as the teachings of that "Apostle, the unlettered Prophet" were mentioned in the "Torah" and the "Gospel".

b) Quoting the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), the Qur'an states:

﴿And when Jesus, son of Mary said: O children of Israel: Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who will come after me, whose name is praised one. Yet when he has come unto them with clear proofs, they say: This is mere magic.﴾(7)

(The Qur'an 61:6)

An interesting aspect of this *Ayah* is that it indicates that in the original revelation uttered by Prophet Jesus, even the name of the long-awaited Messenger was given: Ahmed, which is another name of Prophet Muhammad. This issue will be further discussed later on.

Name or signs?

Turning to the Bible, some may hasten to ask: I read the Bible several times, but never saw the name Muhammad. What is the justification for the title "Muhammad in the Bible?"

Many Christian theologians find no difficulty in pointing out what they consider as clear prophecies of the advent of Jesus. Where in the Old Testament does the name Jesus appear? Nowhere! The main question is whether or not the profile of "that prophet" to come was materialized, and who fits that profile?

The profile of Prophet Muhammad was so clear to many Jews and Christians among his contemporaries that many of them embraced Islam and accepted him as the fulfillment of numerous Biblical

prophecies. Ever since, there have been many others who arrived at the same conclusion. Further questions pertaining to the possible mention of Muhammad's name will be discussed later.

Biblical prophecies about Jesus

Does the previous discussion mean that all prophecies which were believed to have been fulfilled in Prophet Jesus, actually fulfilled in Prophet Muhammad instead?

There is no reason to rule out the possibility that some of the Old Testament prophecies were in fact fulfilled in Prophet Jesus. This does not constitute a problem for the Muslims. On the authority of the Qur'an alone, the Muslims accept Jesus as a legitimate and major prophet of Allah. The same was reiterated in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. There are, however, several Old Testament prophecies which were for a long time misinterpreted so as to apply to Jesus. Such prophecies do in fact refer to Prophet Muhammad. One such prophecy is in Deuteronomy 18:18 to be discussed later. Analysis and reinterpretation of such prophecies should in no way reflect negatively on the honored status of Prophet Jesus in the hearts of Muslims. It is rather a revelation of the truth which would have been proclaimed by Jesus himself if he were among us today.

Main elements in Muhammad's profile

What then are the elements of the "profile" of Prophet Muhammad as depicted in the Bible?

That profile includes six crucial elements:

- The lineage of the Prophet,
- His characteristics,

- The location from which he was to come,
- The revelation which was to be given to him,
- Events which were to take place in his lifetime, and
- The time when he was to come.

I

Lineage of "That Prophet"

Prophet Abraham: Common Father

Jews, Christians, and Muslims claim a common father, Prophet Abraham, the patriarch of monotheism. What does his family tree look like?

A simple look at it may help show some of the key figures in the Abrahamic family tree.[8]

Abraham married Sarah. From their union they had in their progeny the following prophets: Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus.

Abraham married Hajar. From their union they had in their progeny the following prophets: Ishmael and Muhammad.

According to the Bible, Abraham was first married to Sarah who happened to be a barren woman and bore him no children (Genesis 16:1).

In the chronology of the Book of Genesis, God made an important promise to Abraham, even before any child was born to him.

> "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
>
> (Gen. 12:2-3)

In a later chapter in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 16) we are told that Sarah gave Abraham a handmaid (Hajar) to be his wife, in the hope that she may bear a child to Abraham.(9)

Hajar did bear Abraham's first child whose name Ishmael (peace be upon him), meaning "God hears", was given by the angels (Gen 16:11). For the following fourteen years, Ishmael was Abraham's only child.

After the birth of Ishmael and before the birth of Isaac, God's promise to bless the families of the earth through Abraham's descendants was repeated:

> "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee,
> and thou shalt be a father of many nations."
>
> (Gen.17:4)

Another pleasant surprise was in store for Abraham. In his old age, his first wife, Sarah, was to bear him another child, Isaac (peace be upon him) (Gen. 21:5).

The Bible tells us that because of jealousy, Sarah asked her husband Abraham to cast out Ishmael and his mother Hajar (Gen. 21:10) who subsequently dwelt in the wilderness of "PARAN" (Gen. 21:21).

God's promise to bless the descendents of Abraham was indeed realized. Through Abraham's second son Isaac came the Israelite prophets, including Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon(10) and Jesus, peace be upon them all, the last Israelite prophet.(11) Fulfillment of God's promise through the Israelite branch of Abraham is clearly and abundantly articulated in the Bible. How was that promise fulfilled through the Ishmaelite branch of the Abrahamic family tree? Or was it fulfilled at all? Or has it yet to be fulfilled?

To start with, God does not renege on His promises, nor does He forget them. It is interesting to note that while the Bible contains elaborate details about the Israelite branch, the Ishmaelite branch is virtually ignored. With the exception of a few references here and there,[12] the Bible is virtually silent on the Ishmaelites.

If it is accepted that God does not renege on His promises (a prerequisite of faith for any believer in God) then we are left with two possibilities:

a) that such a promise of blessing which included the Israelites had been fulfilled;

b) that it is yet to be fulfilled.

It is well known that out of the descendants of Ishmael came the last great prophet of monotheism, Prophet Muhammad, whose followers constitute nearly one-fifth of the total world population in all corners of the earth.

After blessing the descendants of Isaac, the Israelites, for centuries with the spiritual leadership, and after many lapses and rebellions against God on their part, a final chance was given to them through the mission of the last Israelite prophet, Jesus. When Jesus too was rejected, it was now time in God's plan to fulfill His promise to the Ishmaelite branch as well, the branch which remained obscure until it was made a "great nation"[13] through the mission of the well-known Prophet Muhammad, a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael. That shift of prophethood and spiritual leadership to the Ishmaelite branch of Abraham's descendants brought to completion the centuries-old promise of God to bless the families of the earth through Abraham the father of monotheism and patriarch revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

To any unbiased mind, the above evidence alone suffices to show the connection between such great prophets as Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.

If such prophecies about the advent of Prophet Muhammad are that obvious, how is it that millions of Bible readers could not come to such a conclusion?

Putting other reasons aside, it seems that a combination of erroneous notions and misinterpretations are partly responsible for this situation.

Let's analyze some of these notions.

Objections to the inclusion of Ishmael in God's Covenant with Abraham

Were Ishmael and his descendants excluded from God's promise and covenant?

A common, yet erroneous, answer to this question is yes.

A number of reasons are given:

a) Ishmael was not a legitimate son of Abraham.

According to the commentators of *The Interpreter's Bible*:

> "Ishmael, like Isaac, is a descendant of Abraham; but Isaac is the child of ultimate promise, born to Sarah the true wife while Ishmael is born of the slave girl. Though he came of the stock of Abraham, yet it was right that he should be separated from the legitimate son."(14)

This argument cannot be supported logically, morally, or even on the basis of the available versions of the Bible itself. Did the alleged state of bondage of Hajar prevent her from being a legitimate wife of

Abraham. Why was she not a "true" wife? And if she were not a "true" wife like Sarah, what kind of wife was she?

The text of the Bible, not withstanding the possibilities of later insertions or changes, does not make such a claim. In Genesis (16:3), Hajar is described as Abraham's wife.[15]

If Hajar was a legitimate wife of Abraham, there are no grounds whatsoever for questioning the legitimacy of her son Ishmael. Indeed the Bible refers to Ishmael as Abraham's seed[16] who was the first born-child of Abraham.

Even if Hajar was a bondswoman, does that affect the rights and privileges of her son Ishmael?

The answer can be found in the Bible itself. In Hebrew traditions, the first-born son was to have double portions of honor, even inheritance, and that right could not be changed due to the status of his mother.

In *The Interpreter's Bible*, we read the following commentary on Deut. 21:15-17:

> "However, the law of the first-born had ancient sanction, and so long as it was accepted justice demanded that mere favouritism not be allowed to deprive the eldest son of his rights."[17]

It should be noted that God does not subscribe to human attitudes of ethnic or racial superiority or exclusivism, much less the submergence of spiritual and human qualities of mankind because of a certain unfortunate state of bondage. The fallacy of Ishmael's inferior status owing to his mother's "inferior" social status is not contrary to the moral, humanitarian and universal nature of God's revelation cherished by any believer in Him.

b) Only Isaac was the son of promise and covenant.

Sometimes reference is made to the following verses in the Book of Genesis:

> "But My Covenant will I establish with Isaac"
>
> (Gen. 17:2)
>
> "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called"
>
> (Gen. 21:12)

An interesting question is raised here: Is it possible that the writer (s) of this book (Genesis) inserted such statements to favour his own clan, himself being an Israelite?

According to *The Interpreter's Bible*:

> "Many Israelites did not want a God who would be equally the God of all nations on the earth. They did not want one who would be impartial Holiness. They wanted a God who would be partial to them. So we read in Deuteronomy of demands for a complete extermination of all non-Israelitish peoples of Palestine (Deut. 7:2) and as to the carrying out of that injunction read the harsh sentences of Deut. 20:10-17"[(18)]

The possibility of insertions introduced to the supposedly "original" text of revelation is a matter that many Biblical scholars readily admit, including those scholars who are earnest believers in Christianity such as the editors of and contributors to *The Interpreter's Bible*.[(19)]

For example, the word "Egyptian" which appears in Genesis (16:3) in reference to Hajar is suspected to be an insertion and that Hajar was indeed a Bedouin and not an Egyptian woman.[(20)]

In addition to such a possibility, if not likelihood, of insertions in Gen. (17:21) and (21:12), they do not in themselves conclusively exclude Ishmael from the promise and covenant of God.

Both verses could be understood to refer to the relatively "near" future extending over centuries during which the covenant of God and the seeds of prophethood were to be mainly in the Israelite branch of Abraham's family. Such limitation, however, does not mean or imply the exclusion of the descendents of Ishmael for good. When these two verses (Gen. 17:12 and 21:12) are examined within the context of other verses in the same book, it becomes evident that the Ishmaelites were included in God's promise and His covenant with Abraham:

i) God's covenant with Abraham was made before the latter had any children (Gen. 12:2-3). It was reiterated after the birth of Ishmael and before the birth of Isaac (Gen. 17:4).[21]

ii) While Gen. (21:12) indicates that in Isaac shall Abraham's seed be called, the very following verse (Gen. 21:13) calls Ishmael Abraham's seed.

iii) As Isaac was blessed in the same book (Genesis), Ishmael is also specifically blessed and hence is included in God's promise.

> "...of the son of the bondswoman (i.e. Ishmael) will I make a great nation because he is thy seed"
>
> (Gen. 21:13)

The above promise was further confirmed a few verses later:

> "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.
>
> (Gen. 21:18)

It may be noted here that when God speaks of "greatness", He does not speak merely of numbers. "Greatness" in His own criterion is above all founded on faith, spiritual heritage and religious leadership.

c) The Son of Promise must be one or the other: Isaac or Ishmael.

This is typically expressed in a statement like the following:

> "Ishmael is set aside as the inheritor of the Covenant. The fact that the (supposed) elder son of Abraham did not become the heir of the divine promise is accounted for in J2 by Hajar's flight before the child's birth (Ch. 16), and in E by her expulsion with the child (21:9-21)..."[22]

One may inquire at this point:

i) Why should there be only one child as the heir of the divine promise? Why not both sons in view of the evidence discussed already?

ii) What type of divine justice punishes an innocent child because of his mother's flight before he was even born (especially if that flight was prompted by the jealousy and mistreatment of Sarah)?

iii) What type of divine justice (or even common sense) is it that punishes an innocent child because he and his mother were "expelled" to satisfy Sarah's ego and bless her jealousy? Was Sarah dictating her desires to God, too?

Why were Ishmael and Hajar taken away?

If Muslims too believe that Hajar (Abraham's wife) and her son Ishmael were settled in a different location, what is their version of the story? And how does that version compare to the Biblical version?

The Muslim version [23]

Prophet Abraham received instruction from God to take Hajar and her baby Ishmael to a specified barren and lifeless place in Arabia (Paran), more specifically to Makkah (Mecca). In the Qur'an, Abraham is quoted:

> ﴾ *Our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation by thy sacred house; in order, O Lord, that they may establish prayer: So fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits: So they may give thanks.* ﴿
>
> (The Qur'an 14:37)

When Abraham began to leave Hajar and Ishmael alone in such barren wilderness, Hajar cried to him: "Where are you leaving us?" The question was repeated three times but no answer was given by Abraham. Hajar then asked: "Did God ordain you to do this?" Abraham said: "Yes." In complete faith and trust on God she responded "Then, He will not suffer us to be lost."

When Hajar ran out of water, she started to hasten between two little hills called as-Safa and al-Marwah in search of water or for any passing traveler. After she hastened seven times without success, she returned to check on her baby (Ishmael) who was crying and kicking the ground with his heels. In this moment of despair and apparent certain death, a spring of water suddenly gushed forth from under Ishmael's feet. That well later came to be known as the well of Zamzam. Since water is the most crucial element in desert life, some Bedouins began to settle around the well, gradually growing into the most important city in Arabia, Makkah (Mecca). Centuries later, out of the descendants of Ishmael came the last prophet of God, Prophet

Muhammad[24] who was born in Makkah (Mecca) some five centuries after the mission of the last Israelite prophet, Jesus.

It is interesting to note that until the present time, the hills of as-Safa and al-Marwah are still easily identifiable. Indeed, hastening between these two hills is part of the annual rites of *Hajj* performed by innumerable pilgrims every year. This rite is actually performed partly in commemoration of Hajar's search for water and it dates back to Ishmael, long before the advent of Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, the Well of Zamzam which miraculously gushed forth from under baby Ishmael's feet is still gushing with water until this time. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to Makkah (recently about two million) drink from it annually and many others drink from it all year round.

The Biblical version [25]

Sarah, Abraham's first wife, was jealous of Hajar and her son Ishmael. She did not want Ishmael to inherit with her son Isaac as Ishmael was the son of the "bondswoman". She was particularly angry because of what she considered as mockery on the part of Ishmael toward his younger brother Isaac while they were playing together. This incident took place after Isaac was weaned.

Abraham obeyed his wife Sarah whose demand of casting out the "bondswoman" and her son was blessed by God who told Abraham to "hearken unto her voice".

One morning Abraham rose up, gave provisions and water to his wife Hajar and put her child Ishmael upon her shoulder, and left them in the wilderness of Beer Sheba in southern Palestine. When Hajar ran out of water, she could not stand sitting there and watching her child die. An angel appeared before her and showed her a spring of water of

which she went and brought drink to the lad. The angel further told her, "Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."[26]

Ishmael dwelt in the wilderness of "Paran".[27] He begot twelve sons one of whom was named "Kedar".[28]

Similarities between the two versions

How does this tradition compare with the Muslim version? There appears to be at least three similarities between the two versions:

i) That Hajar and Ishmael were taken away from Palestine and dwelt in the wilderness (of Paran);

ii) That Hajar ran out of water and was worried about the life of her son Ishmael;

iii) That, unexpectedly, she had access to water which she gave to her son to save his life.

Differences between the two versions

According to the Muslim version:

Hajar and Ishmael were taken away because of a specific divine instruction given to Abraham as part of the divine plan. When the time came, prophethood was to shift from the Israelites to the Ishmaelites, after the rejection of the last Israelite prophet, Jesus, by the Israelites.

Hajar and Ishmael were taken to the wilderness of Arabia, specifically to Makkah (Mecca) and not to Beer Sheba.

This incident took place before the birth of Isaac and not after, when Ishmael was a baby, which is a further confirmation of the real reason for Hajar and Ishmael's apparent exile as stated in the first difference.

Analysis of differences

Is reconciliation of these differences possible? Let's focus on the last difference, namely did this incident take place before or after Isaac's birth?

If we were to accept the Biblical version, we would encounter a number of inconsistencies and contradictions.

It is abundantly clear from the story in Gen. 21:14-19 that Ishmael was a little baby at the time. Following is the documentation of this statement:

According to Gen. 16:16 Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. And according to Gen. 21:5 Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. It follows that Ishmael was already fourteen years old when his younger brother Isaac was born.

According to Gen. 21:14-19, the incident took place after Isaac was weaned. Biblical scholars tell us that "the child was weaned about the age of three".

It follows that when Hajar and Ishmael were taken away Ishmael was a full grown teenager seventeen years old.

The profile of Ishmael in Gen. 21:14-19, however, is that of a small baby and not of a teenager. Why?

First, according to *The Interpreter's Bible*, the original Hebrew for Gen. 21:14 was ".... and put the child upon her shoulder". The same reading is rendered in the Revised Standard Edition of the Bible. Then, how would a mother carry a seventeen years old teenager "upon her shoulder"? Certainly he was strong enough to carry his mother! Ishmael must have been a baby!

Secondly, in Gen. 21:15 we are told that Hajar "cast" the child under one of the shrubs. Again, according to this Biblical text Ishmael must have been a baby and not a teenager.

Thirdly, in Gen. 21:16 we are told that Hajar sat away so that she may not see the death of the child before her own eyes. Is that a profile of a husky seventeen years old teenager who probably was capable of being worried about his mother dying before his eyes? Or is it obviously a profile of a small helpless baby or at most a small child?

Fourthly, according to Gen. 21:17, the angels told Hajar "arise, lift up the lad". Is a seventeen years old young man a proper object to be "lifted up" by a woman? or is that a reference to a small child or a baby?

Fifthly, in Gen. 21:19, we are told that Hajar went to fill the bottle with water "and give the lad a drink". One would expect a strong young man of seventeen to go and bring water to his mother instead.[(29)]

The above analysis leads to the inevitable conclusion that while the Bible contains some truths as explained earlier, there is also evidence of human additions, deletions, and interpolations which only a subsequent authentic revelation (The Qur'an) could clarify. The Islamic version of the story is fully consistent and coherent from A to Z; Ishmael was a baby and Isaac was not born yet when this incident took place. This coherence and consistency are confirmed by centuries-old traditions and even actual locations in Makkah (Mecca) where Hajar and Ishmael settled. This clearly implies that the real reason behind their settlement in Arabia (Paran) was not the dictation, jealousy, ego or sense of racial superiority on the part of Sarah. It was rather God's plan; pure and simple.

It may be relevant to indicate that this issue is not the only instance of inconsistency in respect to Ishmael's story. *The Interpreter's Bible* compares the story of Hajar and Ishmael in Gen. 21:14-19, with that in an earlier chapter (Gen. 16:1-16) and concludes "the inclusion in Genesis of both stories so nearly alike and yet sufficiently different to be inconsistent, is one of many instances of the reluctance of the compilers to sacrifice any of the traditions which has become established in Israel".[30]

The symbol of God's Covenant with Ishmael and his descendants

According to Gen. (17:10-14) circumcision was regarded as a symbol of the covenant with God and a sign of purification from polytheism.

The significance of circumcision is further reiterated by Christian Biblical scholars who indicate that it is not merely an external act:

> "This was His own sign and seal that Israel was a chosen people. Through it a man's life was linked with a great fellowship whose dignity was its high consciousness that it must fulfill the purposes of God."[31]

This picture is completed by referring to Gen. (17:23-27) in which we are told that Abraham took Ishmael and all those males born in his household and circumcised them. Commenting on this, *The Interpreter's Bible* admits that the Ishmaelites and other descendants of Abraham were "somehow participating in the Abrahamic covenant."[32]

It is notable that the descendant of Ishmael, Prophet Muhammad, as well as his followers remain until today faithful to this covenant. Circumcision is required of every male Muslim. Using *The Interpreter's*

Bible's wording; doesn't that mean this was God's "sign and seal" that the Ishmaelites were also part of God's covenant in view of their commitment to purify their belief from all forms of polytheism and to restore the pure and true monotheism of their grandfather Abraham? Are they not closer to the Abrahamic covenant than those who sought excuses not to practice circumcision?

Surely many nations on earth were blessed through Abraham. Those closest to Abraham, to the purity and universal scope of the monotheism he taught and to the "sign and seal" of his covenant with God are presently found among the followers of Ishmael's notable descendant Muhammad. Even without this blood relationship, which is undisputed, the more important relationship with Abraham is the relationship of faith in God's words:

> ﴿*Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to God's (was a Muslim) and he joined not gods with God. Without doubt, among people, the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him, as are also this apostle (Muhammad) and those who believe. And God is the Protector of those who have faith.*﴾
>
> (The Qur'an 3:67-68)

Further evidence about the lineage of the long-awaited Prophet

The foregoing discussion is more than enough to demonstrate that the advent of Prophet Muhammad, a descendant of Ishmael, was indeed the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and Hajar (Gen. 21:13 & 18).

An additional confirmation which leaves no iota of doubt is found in the Book of Isaiah (Ch. 11:1-2):

> "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."

The profile given in this chapter is of someone who will be a prophet, a statesman and a judge and is of the descendants of "Jesse". Who is "Jesse"? And who met these descriptions?

Some contend that "Jesse" is a reference to David's father.

According to Encyclopedia Biblica, however, we read:

> "Jesse is contracted from Ishmael".[33]

The only one who came from Ishmael's "stem" who was a prophet, statesman and judge was Prophet Muhammad.

II

Characteristics of the Awaited Prophet

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was quoted as saying:

> "And the Lord said unto me, they have well spoken that which they have spoken, I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."
>
> (Deuteronomy 18:17-18)[34]

Three important elements are included in this prophecy: A prophet will come from among the "brethren" of the Israelites; this prophet will be "like unto Moses", God will put his words in the mouth of this prophet.

Let us look closely at each element:

A Prophet from among the brethren of the Israelites

When these words were spoken, they were addressed to the Israelites. The most notable "brethren" of Israelites (descendants of

Abraham through his second son Isaac), are the Ishmaelites (descendants of Abraham through his first son Ishmael).

According to the Hebrew Dictionary of the Bible, "Brethren" is the "personification of a group of tribes who were regarded as near kinsmen of the Israelites."

The Bible refers to the Israelites as the brethren of the Ishmaelites (e.g. Gen. 16:12 & Gen. 25:18).

A prophet like unto Moses

It is sometimes contended that the prophet like unto Moses was Jesus. After all, both were Israelites and spiritual teachers. Was this prophecy really about Jesus?

To start off, Jesus himself was an Israelite, not of the "brethern" of the Israelites. This fact alone suffices to show that this particular prophecy is not about the coming of Jesus but about another prophet "like unto Moses". That prophet could have been none but Prophet Muhammad.

Following is a comparison between a few crucial characteristics of Moses, Muhammad and Jesus which may clarify the identity of "that prophet" who was to come after Moses:

Area of Comparison	Moses	Muhammad	Jesus
Birth	Usual	Usual	Unusual
Family life	Married, children	Married, children	No Marriage None
Death	Usual	Usual	Unusual
Career	Prophet/ Statesman	Prophet/ Statesman	Prophet
Forced Emmigration (in adulthood)	To Median	To Medinah	None
Encounter with enemies	Hot pursuit	Hot pursuit/ Battles	No similar encounter
Results of encounter	Moral physical victory	Moral physical victory	Moral victory
Writing down of Revelation	In his lifetime (Torah)	In his lifetime (Al-Qur'an)	After him
Nature of Teachings	Spiritual Legal	Spiritual Legal	Mainly spiritual
Acceptance of leadership (by his people)	Rejected then accepted	Rejected then accepted	Rejected (by most Israelites)

This table is self-evident. It shows that not only were Moses and Muhammad very much alike in many respects, but it shows also that Prophet Jesus does not fit this particular prophecy. Following are the reasons:

The birth of Jesus was unusual. According to Christian and Muslim beliefs, he was miraculously born of the virgin Mary. Both Moses and Muhammad were born in the usual manner.

Both Moses and Muhammad were married and begot children. There is no similar record of marriage and offspring in the case of Jesus.

Both Moses and Muhammad died of natural causes and were buried. The end of the mission of Jesus on earth was unusual; crucifixion according to Christian beliefs and being raised up to the heavens without crucifixion according to Muslim beliefs.

Both Moses and Muhammad were not only prophets and spiritual teachers in the usual sense, but they were also "heads of states" whose mission included the establishment of a "state" founded on the teachings of their faith. No such opportunity presented itself to Prophet Jesus.

Moses left Egypt following knowledge of a plot to kill him and went to Median, where he was welcomed and assured by Jethro. Muhammad left Makkah (Mecca) following knowledge of a plot to kill him and went to Yathrib which was later called al-Madinah (Medina). No similar incident was reported about Jesus in his adulthood and after he began his mission as a prophet.

Moses encountered his enemies (the Pharaoh's army) who sought to destroy him and his followers in "hot pursuit". Muhammad encountered his enemies (the pagan Arabs) who sought to destroy him

and his followers in several battles. No such encounter was reported in the case of Jesus. Indeed he was reported to have commanded Simon Peter to put his sword into the sheath when he attempted to defend Jesus at the time of his arrest.

Moses' encounter with his enemies ended with a military and moral victory. His enemies drowned and Moses and his followers were saved. Muhammad's encounter with his enemies ended with his final military and moral victory over them in the conquest of Mecca. He and his followers reentered Makkah (Mecca), the centre of plotting against him. Impressed with his truthfulness and magnanimity, the great majority of his former enemies chose to become Muslims and were among his ardent supporters. Jesus' victory against his enemies was only a moral victory which did not involve an immediate military victory over them at the same time.

The teachings revealed to Moses were available in a written form in his lifetime. The Qur'an revealed to Muhammad was fully written down in his lifetime and under his supervision. The teachings of Jesus were not committed to writing in his lifetime. Even the earliest Gospel was written down many years after him.

Unlike any other prophets from the lineage of Abraham, the revelation given to Moses and Muhammad contained comprehensive codes of law, in addition to the spiritual and moral elements of their teachings. The teachings of Jesus were almost entirely spiritual. Indeed Jesus never claimed to bring a new law, nor even to abrogate the existing Old Testament Law.(35) He simply added a spiritual and human touch to the concept of law, which by his time had been reduced to the level of lifeless and at times hypocritical formalism. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill", Jesus was quoted as saying.

After initial resistance and skepticism by his people, Moses was accepted by his people as a prophet and a leader in his lifetime, notwithstanding certain lapses (such as the worship of the golden calf). After initial resistance, Muhammad was enthusiastically accepted as a prophet and a leader in his lifetime. Until the end, however, and with the exception of a few followers, Jesus was rejected by his people (the Israelites).

Who was then the "Prophet like unto Moses"?

God will put His Words in the mouth of the Prophet

Generally speaking, this description may apply to any messenger of God who is communicating God's message to mankind. While that message may come in "written tablets" as is believed to have been the case with Moses, the specific wording of the above verse is a vivid description of the type of revelation received by Muhammad. Angel Gabriel used to come and dictate to him specific portions of the Qur'an which were then repeated by Prophet Muhammad exactly as he had heard them. Muhammad's own thinking or authorship were not involved in any way in what he uttered. The words of God (The Qur'an) were "put into his mouth". As the Qur'an itself described:

> ﴾*He (Muhammad) does not speak of his own desire, it is no less than a revelation sent down to him.*﴿
>
> (The Qur'an 53:3-4)

Numerous *Ayah*s in the Qur'an command Muhammad in such terms as *Qul* (say), *Dhakkir* (remind), *Nabbi'* (inform). Other *Ayah*s in the Qur'an start with such expressions as *Waqala Rabbokum* (and your Lord said...). Still in other *Ayah*s it reads *Wayas'aloonaka* ... *Qul* (and they ask you (O Muhammad), say ...).

The above analysis fits not only Deuteronomy (18:18), but is also consistent with the subsequent verses. For example Deuteronomy (18:19) reads:

> "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will
> not hearken unto My words which he shall speak
> in My name, I will require it of him."

It is interesting to note that 113 out of the 114 *Surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an starts with *Bismillahir-rahmanir-raheem* (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). The very first *Ayah* of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad reads:

> ﴾*Read in the name of your Lord who created.*﴿
>
> (The Qur'an 96:1)

Following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, there is no other community of believers who starts almost every action in their daily lives with this formula "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful". It should be noted here that the Arabic term "Allah" is not only the Arabic equivalent of "God", but it is also the personal name of God. To say "In the name of Allah" is a clearer fulfillment of the prophecy "... he shall speak in My name" (Deuteronomy 18:19), than other common expressions such as "In the name of God" or "In the name of the Father".

A fair question at this point is this: Since virtually anyone can presume to speak "in the name of God", what criterion should be used to distinguish between a genuine prophet and messenger of God and other false prophets who may also presume to speak in the name of God?

The answer to this question was clearly given in the concluding verses of Chapter 18 of the Book of Deuteronomy:

> "And if thou say in thine heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shall not be afraid of him."
>
> (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

It is a fact that not a single prophecy made by Prophet Muhammad proved to be inaccurate in the least degree. Every prophecy he made about the near future at his time did come to pass. Examples of these are:

a) The prophecy that Muslims were to conquer the two "super-powers" of their time; the Persian and Byzantine empires. This prophecy was made when Muslims were so few and weak that to prophecise their mere physical survival would have sounded too hopeful!

b) A prophecy that Suraqah (a man who was about to kill Prophet Muhammad during the later's journey to al-Madinah (Medina) after the pagans plotted to kill him) would become a Muslim, participate in the Muslim army conquering the Persian Empire and would actually have access to the Emperor's crown and place it over his head! Not only did this prophecy appear to be a virtual impossibility when it was made, but its fulfillment was so perfect and complete as if the Prophet was looking eye-to-eye at the scene which took place many years after his death. The fact that Suraqah did become a Muslim, lived long enough to participate in the conquest of Persia, that the Muslims came out victorious, that Suraqah had access to the Emperor's crown and actually wore it, can hardly be regarded as a coincidence or a self-fulfilling prophecy. Surely the chances are

nil that such numerous prophecies, all in the minutest detail described by Prophet Muhammad, happened by chance! Nor can such 100% accuracy every time and at all times emanate from any other than a true and genuine prophet using the criterion stipulated in Deuteronomy (18:21-22).

III

Other characteristics of "The Prophet"

Profile of the Prophet Muhammad

An equally interesting and most revealing profile of Prophet Muhammad is found in the 42nd chapter of the Book of Isaiah. Let us examine some of these characteristics:

The One in Whom God's soul delights is called the servant of God (V.1), His elect (V.1) and His Messenger (V. 19).

Translated into Arabic, these titles read "*`Abduhu Warusooluhul-Mustapha*". Surely all prophets were indeed servants, messengers and elects of God. Yet no prophet in history is as universally called by these specific titles as is Muhammad. The testimony of faith by which the person enters into the fold of Islam reads:

"I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger."

Virtually the same formula is repeated five times a day during the call to prayers, five times a day immediately before the beginning of prayers (*Iqamah*), nine times a day during the minimum mandatory

prayers, several more times if the Muslim performs additional recommended prayers (*Sunnah*). The most common title of Prophet Muhammad since his mission until today is *Rasoolullah* (the messenger of God).The Qur'an gives him this title. During his lifetime he was addressed as such by his followers. The voluminous collections of *Hadith* (Prophet Muhammad's sayings) are narrated typically in these forms: "I heard the Messenger of Allah say...", "The Messenger of Allah said or replied...."

He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgement in the earth (V.4), he shall prevail against his enemies (V. 13) and shall bring judgement to the Gentiles (V.1).

In comparing the lives and missions of Jesus and Muhammad, it becomes readily clear that in the case of Jesus he expressed on more than one occasion how disappointed he was in the Israelites' rejection of him. Nor did Jesus live long enough to prevail over his enemies (beyond the moral victory which is a common victory for all prophets).

On the other hand, we find no trace of Prophet Muhammad's discouragement even in the most critical moments of his mission. In one year his beloved and supporting wife Khadijah died following 25 years of successful marriage; his uncle Abu Talib, who was instrumental in protecting him from the fury of the pagan Arabs also died. These two tragedies were combined with the fact that his followers constituted only a small persecuted and tortured group. Under such trying circumstances, Muhammad went to the city of at-Ta'if to invite people to Islam and seek their support in his struggle against paganism. He was rejected, mocked at and stoned to the point of bleeding. In spite of all this he was never "discouraged" to use Isaiah's term (V.4): "O Allah! Forgive my people for they do not know

that they're doing" was his utterance. When Angel Gabriel offered him the chance to retaliate by destroying their city, he refused in the hope that out of the descendants of these wicked people would come those who would worship God!

After this bitter struggle, Muhammad "prevailed against his enemies", established a strong community of believers who indeed "brought judgement to the Gentiles", especially in the Persian and Byzantine Empires. Many such Gentiles were guided to Islam while others suffered defeats. As such he was truly "A light of the Gentiles" of the whole world.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street (V.2).

Not only was this a distinct characteristic and mark of decency of Muhammad's, it was indeed the embodiment of the revelation given to him. In the words of the Qur'an:

> ﴿*Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass.*﴾
>
> (The Qur'an 31:19)

> ﴿*Allah loveth not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who has been wronged.*﴾
>
> (The Qur'an 4:148)

"The Isles shall wait for his law". The only prophet who came, after this prophecy was made (Isaiah's time) with a complete and comprehensive code of law was Prophet Muhammad. The law revealed to him spread to all corners of the earth, even in many remote isles and to the farthest deserts.

He will be sent "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (V. 7).

Many of those who were opposed to the truth and bitterly fought Muhammad ended up among the most devout believers. Their blindness to truth was cured. Those who lived in the darkness of an unholy life came to the light of truth completed through the mission of Muhammad.

No wonder the Qur'an describes itself as "*Nooran-Mubeena*" or light manifest. Describing the Qur'an, God addresses Prophet Muhammad:

> ﴾*A book which We revealed unto you, in order that you may lead mankind out of the depths of darkness unto light by the leave of their Lord to the way of Him, the exalted in power, worthy of all praise.*﴿
>
> (The Qur'an 14:1. Emphasis added)

God's glory will not be given to another (V. 8).

The greatest glory a person receives from God is to be entrusted as His messenger to mankind and receive His glorious revelations. Not only did this apply to Prophet Muhammad, but it uniquely applied to him as the last messenger and prophet of God. Truly God's glory (revelation of scriptures) was not given and will not be given to another prophet after Muhammad, as he is the "seal" of all prophets. It is already about 1400 years since Muhammad was sent and the Qur'an was revealed to him. Yet we hear of no genuine prophet of the magnitude and influence on humanity to be compared with such figures as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Nor do we hear about another post-Qur'anic (glory) or holy book that has influenced mankind to such a degree.

Sing unto the Lord a new song, all his praise from the end of the earth ... (V.10).

A new song may be a reference to a new scripture in a language other than the language of the Israelite scriptures. This interpretation seems consistent with a more explicit mention of someone who will be speaking to people (including the Israelites) in "another tongue" (Isaiah 28:11).

This explanation seems to fit closely with the second half of the same verse (Isaiah 42:16) which speaks of the praise of God "from the ends of the earth". Only in the case of Islam do we find this prophecy realized in amazing accuracy. From all ends of the earth, five times every day, the praise of God and of His last messenger, Muhammad, is chanted from the minarets of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of mosques around the world. Additionally, frequent praise of God and Muhammad by millions of devout Muslims is made on a daily basis. It is even a part of the required five daily prayers to include the praise of Abraham and his descendants and of Muhammad and his descendants. This is known as *As-Salatul-Ibrahimiyyah.*

This person to come is connected with the Arabs, and specifically with the descendants of Ishmael (who settled in Makkah and its environs). Verse 11 of the 42nd chapter of Isaiah leaves absolutely no doubt about the identity of "that prophet":

> "Let the wilderness of and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Ke'dar does inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains."
>
> (Isaiah 42:11)

According to the Book of Genesis, Ke'dar was the second son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13). The best known who came from Ishmael's

descendants is Muhammad. His enemies (who were of his own clan!), who were misled by their leaders or mighty men (as described in Isaiah 21 : 17) ultimately embraced Islam and were embraced by it. Indeed they had reason to "lift up their voice", to "sing" praise of God, and "shout from the top of the mountains". Is that possibly a reference to the shouting of:

> "Here I come (for your service) O Allah. Here I come. Here I come. There is not a partner with you. Here I come. Verily yours is the Praise, the blessings and sovereignty. There is no partner besides you."

This "shouting" is chanted annually by multitudes of Muslims from all over the world from Mount `Arafat as part of the annual rites of *Hajj* (pilgrimage).

The 42nd chapter of Isaiah is indeed a fascinating one. It is not a casual or ambiguous reference to that servant and messenger of God who was to come centuries later. It is rather a comprehensive profile which not only fits Prophet Muhammad but fits no one else. After all, the chapter relates this profile to Ke'dar son of Ishmael and no other descendants of Ishmael fits these descriptions but Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Endnotes

1- Allah in Arabic means the One and Only God, Creator, Lord and Sustainer of the Universe. Unlike the English term "God", the term is not subject to gender (male or female) or to plurality, a befitting and consistent emphasis on the transcendence and Divine Majesty of the Creator.

2- Peace and blessing are sent upon Prophet Muhammad and to all Prophets and Messengers who preceded him as an expression of love and respect for them.

3- The Qur'an 2:285. See also the Qur'an 2:136, 176, 3:3, 84, 5:84.

4- See for example, the Qur'an 3:67, 2:128, 133, 3:52, 10:84, 17:31, 22:78.

5- In the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad was directed to invite the Israelites: ﴿*Say: Produce the Torah and read it (unto us) if you are truthful.*﴾ (The Qur'an 3:93) See also 5:68-69, 71, 48:29.

6- See for example, the Qur'an 2:185, 25:1. On the confirmation in the Qur'an of pervious revelations we read: ﴿*And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented in spite of Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind - Therein is no doubt - from the Lord of the Worlds*﴾ (10:37). See also Qur'an 12:111, 2:89, 101, 6:92, 46:12, 2:41, 91, 97, 35:31, 46:30.

7- Additional references in the Qur'an include 2:89 (that the Israelites expected a new Prophet to come); 2:146-147 9 the people of the book clearly knew him "truth of profile of Prophet Muhammad" as they know their sons); and 3:81 (Allah took covenant of the Prophets to believe and render help "personally or through their followers" to the messenger who will come confirming what was revealed to them.

8- According to Genesis 25:1 Prophet Abraham was also married to Keturah after the death of Sarah. The emphasis in the present context, however, is on Abraham's first two sons, the blessing of whom was specified both in the Qur'an and the Bible as will be shown shortly.

9- It should be noted that polygamous marriages were not uncommon among the Israelites, including some of the Israelite Prophets. Even "the friend of God", Prophet Abraham, who was blessed by God and through whom the families were blessed (Gen. 12:2-3, 17:4), had a polygamous marriage and certainly for a good cause.

10- According to Muslim belief, David and Solomon (peace be upon them) were both Prophets of God, not just "kings".

11- The Qur'an makes it clear that Jesus was one of the major prophets of God. For a further discussion of this question see Jamal A. Badawi's *Jesus in the Qur'an*, Islamic Information Foundation.

12- Ishmael (peace be upon him) had twelve sons of whom is "Kedar" (Gen. 25:13). Other mentions of "Kedar" will be discussed later on.

13- Specific reference to making a "great nation" of Ishmael appears in Genesis 21:13, 18. These key verses are discussed later on.

14- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Abingdom Press, N.Y., 1952, vol. 1, p. 605. Emphasis added.

15- "And Sa'rai, A'bram's wife, took Ha'gar her maid, the Egyptian, after A'bram had dwelt ten years in the land of Can'naan, and gave her to her husband A'bram to be his wife." (Genesis 16:3, Emphasis added).

16- See for example Gen. 21:13. In other verses Ishmael is called as Abraham's son: "And Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called his son's name, which Ha'ager bore, Ishma'el. (Genesis 16:15, Emphasis is ours) "And his sons I'saac and Ish'ma-el buried him ..." (Genesis 25:9. Emphasis is ours).

17- *The Interpreter's Bible*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 461. Emphasis added.

18- *The Interpreter's Bible*, op. cit., vol. 1, p.575. The citations referred to read in the Bible as follows: "And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them". (Deuteronomy 7:2) "When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if its answer to you is peace and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword, but the

women and the little ones, the cattle, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you. Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded". (Deuteronomy 20:10-17)

19- In the introduction to *The Interpreter's Bible*, it is stated: "... So our editors and contributors eagerly confess, as men under saving conviction, that God is Christ for us men, and for our salvation, came down...and was made man". The Bible was also described as "Present Wonder of heavenly truth". *The Interpreter's Bible*, op. cit., p. XVII and XVIII.

20- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, vol. 1, p.604.

21- Commenting on this chapter (Gen. 17), *The Interpreter's Bible* that at this point, Abraham was promised 3 things: to be the father of many nations; that God will be "God to you and your descendants after you; to possess the land of Canaan for everlasting possession." Ibid, vol. 1, p. 611.

22- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, vol. I, p. 615. Emphasis added.

23- The Muslim version of the settlement of Hagar and Ishmael in "Paran" is not prompted by Sarah's jealousy. This will be discussed later on. An interesting question on the above citation. (Vol. 1, p. 615) is: Why are the editors referring to Ishmael as the "supposed" elder son of Abraham when the Bible itself presents it as a "fact"? What room for "supposition" is there? One wonders whether this is an example of negative attitudes towards the Ishmaelites; a continuation of the same bias that the editors of the Interpreter's Bible did not seem excited about in Vol. 1, p. 575 (see footnote #20). It should be acknowledged, however, that in some places, less biased statements were made. For example on the commentary on Gen. 17:4, it is stated: "God's first promise is that Abraham shall be the father of a multitude of nations. This reference is not only to Israel but also to the Ishmaelites, the Edomites, and the nations whose eponymouse ancestors are listed in 25:2-4, all of whom the documents had claimed as descendents of Abraham, *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 609.

24- This was the divine response to Abraham's prayer. ﴿*O my Lord! Make me one who establishes prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring: Our Lord! and accept my prayer.*﴾ (The Qur'an 14:40). It is interesting to note that Islam requires the Muslim to establish regular prayers at least five times a day. Each of these prayers includes invocation of blessings upon Abraham and his descendants. (Compare with Genesis. 12:3). A more explicit prayer of Abraham is the following: ﴿*Our Lord! Send among them an Apostle of their own, who shall rehearse your signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify: For you are the exalted in Might, the Wise.*﴾ (The Qur'an 2:129).

25- See, Genesis 21:9-21.

26- Genesis 21:18.

27- Genesis 21:21.

28- Genesis 25:13.

29- An interesting and relevant comment, from a Christian perspective is made in the commentary on Genesis Ch 21: "Where he is" is an allusion to the site of the well mentioned in V.19 a sacred spot among the Ishmaelites." *The Interpreter's Bible*., op. cit., vol. 1, p. 639. Emphasis added. It is noted that the most sacred spot well-spot among the Ishmaelite is the well of Zamzam in Makkah (Mecca).

30- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, p. 604.

31- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, p. 613.

32- *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ibid, p. 616.

33- Cheyene, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* under "Names". If that prophecy were about Jesus (peace be upon him) it would have simply said "...of the stem of David...." David, and not his father, was a much more prominent figure in the Old Testament. It would have been more logical to relate Jesus to David (peace be upon them) as did some of the authors of the gospel calling Jesus the descendant of David.

34- Notice Paul's attempt in Acts 13:22-23 to interpret this prophecy as a reference to Jesus who was neither of the descendants of Ishmael (Jesse) nor of the "brethren" of Israelites being an Israelite himself.

35- Matthew 5:17.

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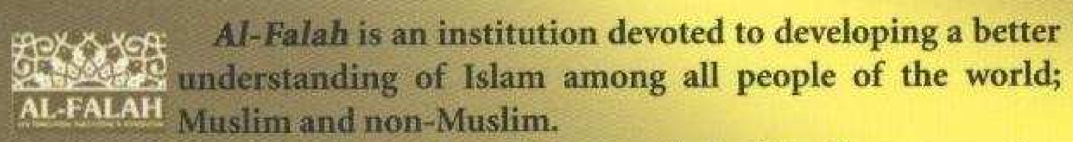
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I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Upon whom to these characteristics of the awaited prophet apply? Upon Jesus or Muhammad (peace be upon them).

This book examines these prophecies in a very logical and scientific method.



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